



Charlotte Mason's House of Education,
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BOOKS.

'En hoexkens ende boexkens.'

Nature Readers: Seaside and Wayside (Educational Supply Association, Holborn Viaduct). This is a very charming series, good for schools, and very good for families. We cannot imagine any child who has grown up upon such books as these being without a real intimate knowledge of Nature and her ways, and a life-long delight in our fellow-creatures of what we are pleased to call the lowlier sort. *Seaside and Wayside* is the third volume of the series. A glance at the table of contents is startling. You feel that a little work which covers so wide a range of subjects must needs be superficial, but it is hardly possible to open a page which does not tell you something charming, and, if not new, so charmingly put, that it reads "as good as new." The "Bees' Garden" is the title of one charming chapter, and this is the sort of thing we read:

"There is a large family of flowers called the Labiates. This name is given to them because their corollas are more or less lip-shaped. A labiate corolla is made of one piece or petal, tube-shaped, forming a throat. The upper part of this corolla is divided into scollops or lobes, which take the form of a mouth, with upper and lower lips. There are many pretty and curious shapes of labiates or lip corollas. Some are nearly closed, as if the flower meant to keep all its secrets to itself. Some are stretched wide open, as if the flower were tired and yawning. Others are partly open, as if the flower were laughing for very joy of the sunshine, and sweet air, and the merry voices of its insect friends. Except the orchids, no plants have such curious blossoms as those of the Labiate family. There are no flowers so dear to the bees, and such close allies of theirs, as these Labiates. I think if bees knew how to plant a garden, they would fill it almost entirely with varieties of this family. But bees cannot plant gardens; all they can do in the way of gardening is to aid in the production of strong and healthy seeds, by carrying pollen from flower to flower. The Labiate family seem to be just such flower friends as bees prefer. Let us consider some of their good points as bee friends. First, they are chiefly of such colours as bees like best—blue, red, pink, purple. Second, most of them have a rich aromatic perfume. Third, many of them bloom late in the autumn, when most other flowers are gone. Also they are long bloomers, beginning early and lasting the summer through; while some of them come among the first spring flowers. So you see our bees' garden is in bloom about nine months of the year. Let me now name to you some of the flowers of this family. You will see directly that they grow by all roadsides and in nearly all gardens, and that some are

cultivated for various uses. Of these last, the lavender, rosemary, and patchouli are carefully grown in fields, and sold for perfumes. The sage, thyme, marjoram, and basil are also cultivated; they are sold in the markets for food seasoning. The cook calls them "pot-herbs." The mint, balm, catmint, penny-royal, horehound, and hyssop, are used in teas and in medicine. Side by side around the world and through time go the bees and the Labiate flowers of their garden. The long proboscis of the bee is just the right instrument to reach into and rifle the long narrow throat of the thyme blossoms, and the open mouth invites the visitor, and gives room for the bee's head to enter well, so that he shall by no means miss the pollen."

Education and School. (Thring: Macmillan.) Every parent should possess this book. It is true that it deals largely with questions which concern the schoolmaster chiefly; as, for example, the classics as instruments of education, the conditions of a successful school, masters, environments, and so on. But even these are questions that indirectly concern even parents of young children. Some time, these will have to go to school, and it is well that parents should keep before them an ideal of school life, and an ideal school. Somehow, ideals have a way of fulfilling themselves; and the demand creates the supply. If schools are not perfect; if they turn out their men and women on a not much higher platform than the parents of these men and women occupied before; if there are radical faults in our schools, not only in method, but in principle—why, the fault lies not with schoolmaster or schoolmistress, but with parents. It is absolutely certain that our schools are what parents desire to have them, and are, on the whole, very much in advance of the parental ideal. Where they fail, does not Mr. Thring put his finger on the spot when he gives us these popular theories of education—theories which, by the way, parents do not put into words, but which they do allow to govern their action?

"Getting the children out of the way with an easy conscience, which is a luxury.

Getting them an advance on the home nursery, which is a luxury.

Getting them a good connection, which is a doubtful luxury.

Giving them a chance in an intellectual lottery, which is a chance."

It would, however, be a mistake to take up this volume merely as a sort of finger-post to a good school. It is full of wise hints, thoroughly practical and available for the training of children from the very first. Here, for example, is a useful remark: "It must be borne in mind that with the young memory is strong, and logical perception weak. All teaching should start on this undoubted fact. It sounds very fascinating to talk about *understanding everything, learning everything thoroughly*, and all those broad phrases which plump down on a difficulty and hide it. Put in practice, they are about on a par with exhorting a boy to mind he does not go into the water till he can swim. In the first place, a certain number of facts must be known before any complex thing can be understood even by those who are capable of understanding it." This is worth bearing in mind. The matter would have been made a little plainer if the strength of the "young memory" were not treated as an arbitrary fact, but if it were recognised that memory is the mere result of attention, and that the child's eager interest in everything—because every-

thing is new to him—is the real secret of his good memory. Still, the fact remains, the memory is strong, and this is one of the natural truths which direct our efforts at education. We know that a dim perception of this truth lay at the foundation of the old system of learning by rote, which the modern educationalist condemns. But the mistake lay in not perceiving *why* children remember well; no pains were taken to interest them in the matter they were compelled to commit to memory, and the memory work of the old school was *nil* in educational value. But here we have suggestion as to wise action upon this fundamental truth.

"But memory is, or may be, very powerful; the ease with which little children pick up language shows this: parents do not wait till children understand everything before they teach them to talk, and could not if they would, because of the parrot power of the child. Nature herself prescribes a wise collection of material at first, without troubling how far it is understood; be sure if it interests, it is understood enough. This collection cannot begin too early; the same natural law that makes little children talk, makes little children have inquisitive minds, and power enough to take the next step too, and learn to read nearly as soon as they can talk well. This is not injurious. Injurious work is the forcing the child to continued exertion. The mind in this is like the body: look at the restless activity of the puppy when it is not asleep, but observe every half-minute or so it has its little rests and pauses. Look at the young child at play, it is the same. But take the puppy out a set walk, and it will probably die, because it cannot rest when it pleases. This is the law for the very young. No praise or blame must be used to hinder the little creatures from resting when they like, but within this limit let them have every opportunity of active exercise in body and mind. A good nursery library, which the children may use when and how they please, asking no leave, and under no compulsion, is an invaluable boon. Why should not the little restless mind have something to feed on? It is the doing a given amount of work in a given time which kills; whereas, by imperceptible degrees, with actual pleasure and no strain, a child may be allowed to acquire much knowledge in a desultory way. It is no effort, because there is plenty of time. If it is not done in this way, the poor child afterwards, at eight or ten years of age, is expected to learn in a year or two what might have been spread over the four or six previous years. This is *cram*, and very useless *cram* too.

"The fate of too many is decided by the time they are twelve years old, and the stamp of mediocrity pressed down heavily on them. For lost time not only means lost knowledge, but the lost power of getting knowledge. Just as on a journey a man who slept till midday always would not only be remaining still while he slept, but also getting fat and unable to move on when awake. It is too late to wish to run a race, however strong the wish may be, when your antagonist is not only half the race ahead, but you are too fat to move.

"There can be no doubt that not to give full opportunity of exercise to the young creature, both in mind and body, is as much against Nature and Nature's laws as to force it to continue action by injudicious severity or more injudicious praise. But Nature instructs us thus far, that there is a perpetual restlessness of curiosity, combined with great capacity for receiving any new impressions, because they are new, whether understood or not, in

the young, until Art steps in and stops it, somewhat positively, by blaming questions which the hearers find it inconvenient to answer—sometimes indirectly, by telling the little being not to trouble till it gets older. Nature, however, teaches us to furnish material for the mind to feed on from the earliest dawn of intelligence; those who are wise will continue to do so, and at school the same process must for a time be continued to a great extent. The collection of material for work and thought is the chief object of all school life, but the almost exclusive object of lower school-life."

Here are some weighty observations that we beg to commend to parents. It is true that the appointment of masters in great schools does not rest with them, but possibly no head master, not the great Dr. Arnold himself, has exercised an effect upon character equal to that wielded by the young "nursery governess," who is picked up in the most casual way, and with little care to ascertain more about her than that she is the child of fairly respectable parents, is "nice," and, above all, "ladylike." And this young woman, so casually picked up, is entrusted with the task, not merely of teaching children their first lessons (and, too commonly, giving them a distaste for learning which lasts them all their life), but with the task, not set down on her time-table, of moulding the characters of the children during their most plastic and impressionable years. Let us hear Mr. Thring on the work of a master, noticing that in his eyes it is the lower forms, and not the upper, that require the best men:

"Teaching is a life-long learning how to deal with human minds. As infinite as the human mind is in its variety, ought the resources of the teacher to be. The more stupid the pupils, the more skill is required to make them learn. And thus it comes to pass that whilst the mere possession of knowledge is enough to teach advanced classes, if it is right to profane the word by calling pouring knowledge into troughs teaching, the teaching little boys, and stupid boys, and low classes well, is a thing of wonderful skill. Not that there is not room for skill as great in the higher classes, but the absence of it is not so self-evident. And knowledge is a thing that can be measured and ticketed; skill is not, and therefore makes but little show. Hence young men come from the great knowledge shops of the universities with their honours, their learning, and their intellectual sword-play, and scorn low classes, being ignorant of the variety of the human mind, ignorant of the exquisite skill, and subtle simplicity wanted to meet the twistings and windings and resistance of uncultivated humanity. They have got hold of a lump of knowledge, and go about with glorious effrontery, pushing it into every keyhole, and are angry that the locks will not open. Why, it is not a key at all as yet, and if it was a key there are more locks than one in the world, and more minds. Life is too short for any one to learn how to teach, but not too short to begin learning.

"How to manage all the different kinds of temper and forms of resistance, to quicken the dull, brace up the idle, master the obstinate, repress here, encourage there, soothe one, subdue another, breathe life and animation into all, is a task of the highest demand on power, and strength, and skill.

"The work is interesting, holy, great and good, but no afternoon's by-play, no hireling work, if well done. It may be made so in a great degree by being treated as such; but for all that, those who really do it must do it in

no hireling spirit. Can, then, young men just come and go, and do it whilst looking about for something better, and do it well? If teaching is a great reality and a most severe task, it must be acknowledged as such.

"These intense interests cannot find place in the heart of a man who has just pitched his tent, and will be off again to-morrow. He can pour out knowledge, but he will be no teacher. He will not so reach the heart and play with skill on the heart-strings, and be able or willing to study each page of humanity laid open before him, as to make him an efficient trainer of each boy. . . . Fathers and mothers do well about the welfare each of his own child; and it is strange how lightly they think and deal with those who manage their children.

"Teaching is a science, and a most deep heart-question. That this is not the popular opinion on the subject does not alter the case, if it is true."

Parents will find much that is illuminating and suggestive in a volume which is possibly less well known to them than to teachers.

Ideals of Culture: Two Addresses to Students. By Edward A. Sonnenschein, Oxon (Swan Sonnenschein & Co., 2s. 6d.).—Parents who have not made up their minds on the vexed question of classical or modern culture will find Professor Sonnenschein's two lectures pleasant and helpful reading. We have only room to quote his summing-up of the matter of his first lecture on *Science and Culture*: "Let me cast a brief glance upon the general aim and purport of what I have said. The prime essentials of culture are science and poetry; and they may be cultivated without spreading ourselves impartially over the whole field of knowledge, without ascetically denying our special bent. One branch of either of the great departments, nature and literature, may give us scope for both energies of soul; but the student of nature cannot be independent of the aid of poetry, unless, indeed, he is a poet himself. Further, in resigning claims to universal knowledge, we may remember that to command one department is to command many potentially, and even involves inquiry into and partial grasp of subjects lying outside it. Finally, life is long enough to admit of our making practical experience of our fellow-men, without which we ourselves are scarcely human.

"Philosophy might be called poetry in undress. The late Mark Pattison spoke of philosophy as a disposition, a method of conceiving things—not a series of demonstrable propositions. In this sense, it means the power of escaping from one's own limitations, and of rising to higher conceptions; the capacity of reverence for the wider universe of which one's positive knowledge touches merely the fringe; the saving knowledge by which man corrects the tendencies to intellectual arrogance: and this is what I mean by poetry."

The second essay, on *Ancient Greek Games*, is very interesting, and tends to show that "there are many points of kinship between Greece and England: not the least is the ideal, fostered alike by ancient philosophers and by English schools and universities, of physical and intellectual education going hand in hand." We cannot refrain from giving our readers the pleasure of reading of the games of the Greek child: "The rattle, the ball, the hoop, trundled by a crooked necked iron; the swing, occupied the same position in Greece as in our nurseries; the top is as old as Homer

Boys amused themselves with a kind of stilts and with toy carts, girls with the inevitable doll, made probably of wax or clay. It is pleasing to hear of children making their own toys. Aristophanes speaks of a precocious child that carved ships for himself, and made carts out of leather, and frogs out of pomegranate peel. Lucian says that when he got out of school he used to make oxen or horses, or even men, out of wax. Plato recommends that children should have mimic tools given them, in order to amuse themselves with carpentering. But it may be gathered that he did not approve of too many toys, which are apt to discourage originality; he rather praises the natural modes of amusement which children find out for themselves when they meet. Such were a host of games which did not require any special apparatus; the game of "king," in which children played at being kings and common soldiers; "odds and evens," a game of guessing; other games of guessing—e.g., guessing the number of nuts in the hand; "slap in the dark," in which the object was to guess, with closed eyes, who had given a box on the ears; "hunt the slipper," a piece of rope being used instead of the slipper; "catch ball," "hide and seek," "heads and tails," played with an oyster shell blackened on one side; the game of the pipkin, in which one child sat in the middle, the others running round, and pinching or slapping him until they were caught, and had to be the pipkin in turn; the similar game of the "tortoise," the "brazen fly," a sort of "blind man's buff," prettily described by Pollux: "One child had his eyes tied with a bandage, and turning round, cried, 'I will hunt a brazen fly,' and the others answered, 'You will hunt, but you will not catch,' and struck him with thongs of leather till one of them was caught." "Kiss in the ring" is an ancient institution, though we have no details as to how it was played. Then there were games of strength, like "tug," a sort of "French and English," "pulling tug," in which the object was to haul one's opponent up by means of a rope passed through a pulley. "Ride a cock-horse" was an amusement which we hear of both in Greece and Rome."

A few more "educational books on early training most suitable for mothers": *Hints on Child Training*, by H. C. Trumbull (Hodder & Stoughton): a most valuable, sympathetic book. *Lectures on the Linguistic Method*, by Prof. Laurie (published by Cambridge University Press): an invaluable book for mothers and teachers. *The Mother's Book*, by Mrs. Child: I fear out of print. *Common Sense in the Nursery*, Marian Harland. Roger Ascham's *Schoolmaster* (Cassell's National Library). *Students' Pestalozzi*, by J. Russell (Swan Sonnenschein & Co.). Cobbett's *Advice to Young Men*. *Art of Thriving*, by Rev. T. T. Walters (published by Jarrold): a book for cottagers, but with a charming chapter on the upbringing of children for mothers of all classes to read.—M. A. R.

The Little Gardeners (an allegory, published by Jarrold) is a very sweet little book, teaching moral lessons to children, which J. P. might find useful. I should be very glad to know of a book giving the simple old-fashioned names of the flowers without the regular technical study of botany. I should be so glad to know which of the books recommended to J. P. is the simplest.

Bandage Drill with Music for Children from Five Years of Age. By Mrs. Francis Steinthal (George Philip & Son) 1s.—Mrs. Steinthal, who is well-

known to the readers of the *Parents' Review*, has produced a capital game for the children, far more delightful than any mere play, and which, while giving free scope for their faculty of "endless imitation," will help to make them effectual helpful men and women, of use in emergencies, knowing what is the right thing to do and how to do it when any accident to life or limb occurs in their neighbourhood. And it is not only when they are grown-up that this knowledge may be of use to the children. Every now and then the newspapers tell us of some heroic deed of a little child, some life saved at the imminent risk of his own, or at the cost of surprising Herculean effort on the part of the little men (or, fully as often, the little women). Now, seeing that children show themselves infinitely helpful with nothing but their own common sense to guide them, is it not the part of wisdom to teach them *how* to render the help their warm hearts and ready wits make them so well able to give? Mrs. Steinthal says: "Last year the favourite game of my children was to play at being doctors and hospital nurses, and they were constantly asking how they could do this and that bandage. It occurred to me one day that it might be possible to teach them the simpler bandages correctly and methodically, just as they learnt fan and flag drill, and that it would be of great practical service to them in after life. I therefore took the existing drills as a basis for my work, and finally wrote out the Bandage Drill." Here we have handkerchief bandaging for wounds in head, chest, hand, arm; splints and handkerchiefs for fractures of arm, leg, hand; play treatment of burns and scalds, and of drowning; all done to charming tunes and movement to a bar. In addition to its usefulness the Bandage Drill is exceedingly quaint and pretty. We advise all mothers to introduce it into their nurseries.

THE "P.R." LETTER BAG.

[*The Editor is not responsible for the opinions of correspondents.*]

DEAR EDITOR,—As this is the month of travelling, a few suggestions for a long journey with children may be of use.

An early start is wisest, otherwise the excitement increases every half-hour. A definite mid-day rest in the train is a wise plan; a little prize to be won by those who *really* fall asleep has a marvellous effect. The meals should be as regular as at home; the dinner perhaps a little earlier. There is no need to keep on feeding. Every one has his or her own menu. We have found little half-pound gallypots filled with corn-flour or jelly, to be eaten with doll's spoons, one for each child, a great success. Avoid much meat and bottles of milk; provide fruit and lettuces, and lemonade made at home. Some children travel with dolls and dolls' luggage, and play with them all the way; for those who do not, pencils and paper for drawing, coloured squares for paper folding, string, for cat's cradle or watch-chains, are easy to manage. Games of twenty questions, counting gates and railway bridges, making rhymes, beguile the time. Each fresh employment should be brought out as a novelty, and the children left to amuse themselves. The elder ones may learn much from a good map. Engrossing story-books are not desirable either for the eyes or the mind. The children should look about and see all they can. Journeys ought not to be weary things. Children should be taught to remember that their elders can get tired too. Why have not the elders more of the children's power of enjoyment, and their happy trustful faith that "all will be well"?

M. L. H. D.

DEAR EDITOR,—Will you allow me to say a few words on singing for the little ones. Let them sing, teach them songs, sing with them. I do not think every one may be able to introduce singing as freely as I should advise in the daily routine of lessons. In schools this could not be, except at stated times; but in home education there is more freedom, and often may a little dulness, a little inattention, a little impatience be dispelled by means of a merry song.

In some early happy teaching of mine I found the usefulness of a few simple tunes set to the words of the pretty instructive verses which the good Germans teach to the children. It was my object to teach plenty of German words to the little ones under my care, and to give them therewith a store of sweet thoughts. Every day they learnt a few lines of children's poetry in German, simple verses about fields and flowers and birds, and all that is bright and beautiful.